THE BEST POEMS of 1928

Selected by
THOMAS MOULT

decorations by
JOHN AUSTEN

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Similar to the collections published for the six preceding years, this annual volume seeks to present in an attractive form the most significant poetry printed in the press of Britain and America from July, 1927, to June, 1928.

Hitherto these collections have appeared in the spring of the year following that during which each of them was gathered. Beginning with the present volume, they will appear in the fall of the year specified in the title. This change is in response to many requests made to the editor.

With decorations by JOHN AUSTEN.

Harcourt, Brace and Company
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THE BEST POEMS OF 1928

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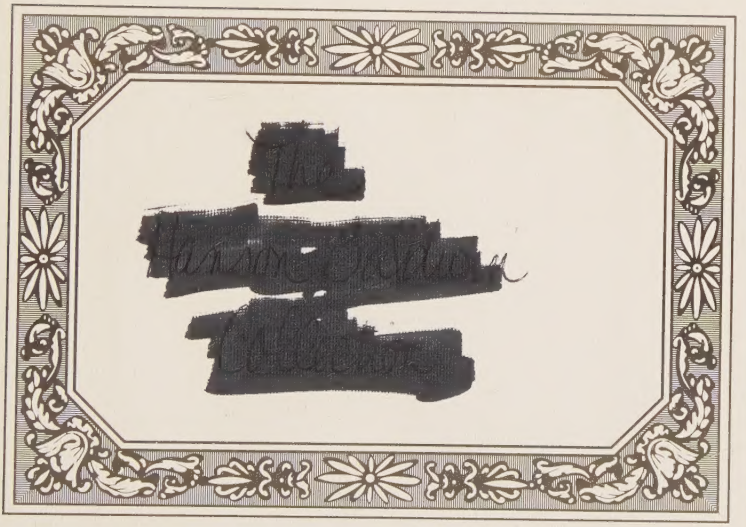

JOHN AVETEN

The BEST POEMS *of* 1928

Selected by
THOMAS MOULT
and decorated by
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To
THE MEMORY
of
THOMAS HARDY
Poet

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Contents

(An asterisk denotes America)

Introduction

William H. Davies — THE TIME OF DREAMS
New Republic, New York, July* 1

Viola Gerard Garvin — FOR OBERON
Spectator, London, July 3

Conrad Aiken — FROM "SONNETS"
Poetry, Chicago, July* 4

Frank Douglas — THE POET ANSWERS HIMSELF
London Mercury, London, July 6

John Hall Wheelock — AFFIRMATION
Scribner's Magazine, New York, July* 8

Edwin Muir — THE TRANCE
Saturday Review, London, July 10

Richard le Gallienne — ACHERON
Munsey's Magazine, New York, July* 11

Dorothy Parker — THE HOMEBODY
New Republic, August* 12

John Drinkwater — FROM "PERSEPHONE"
Bookman, New York, August* 13

John Gould Fletcher — THE UNFAMILIAR HOUSE
Nation, New York, August* 15

Shaemas O'Sheel — THIS IS OUR DOOM
Saturday Review of Literature, New York, August* 17

Struthers Burt — BURIAL
Scribner's Magazine, August* 18

Louis Golding — A SPRINGTIME LOST
Country Life, London, September 25

David Morton LOVERS
New Republic, September* 27
K. Ford THE OLD SPINET
G. K.'s Weekly, London, September 28
Richard Ely Morse "THIS SWAN"
The Dial, New York, September* 29
Alfred Noyes THE DOUBLE FORTRESS
Sunday Times, London, September 30
R. N. D. Wilson SAINT APOLLINARE IN CLASSE
Criterion, London, October 31
Virginia Lyne Tunstall OH CHERISH BEAUTY
The Lyric, Norfolk, Virginia, October* 32
Roy Campbell TRISTAN DA CUNHA
New Statesman, London, October 33
Stephen Vincent Benét AMERICAN NAMES
Yale Review, Connecticut, October* 37
John Freeman A VISIT TO THOMAS HARDY
The Observer, London, October 39
W. Force Stead HYMN TO DEMETER
Virginia Quarterly Review, Virginia, October* 40
W. Force Stead THE HAWTHORN BOUGH
London Mercury, November 42
Hamish Maclaren THE UNIVERSAL TAVERN
Spectator, November 43
Robert Herring CREDITORS
London Mercury, November 46
D. S. Leonard NOT HERE
Spectator, November 48
Herbert E. Palmer NEW HOPE FOR SOME
Irish Statesman, Dublin, November 49
Herbert E. Palmer TRIUMPH SONG
The Nation and the Athenæum, London
November 50

F. R. Higgins THE SCRIBE
Spectator, November 51
Mark van Doren DESERTED HOLLOW
The Dial, December* 52
William Alexander Percy RECOGNITION
The Lyric, December* 54
Suzanne La Follette ULYSSES
Century Magazine, New York, December* 55
R. Ellsworth Larsson THREE PAGES FOR AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY
The Dial, December* 57
William H. Davies HEAVEN AND EARTH
Country Life, January 61
Elizabeth Coatsworth NOW AUTUMN IS HERE
Commonweal, New York, January* 62
F. L. Lucas THE ELMS OF PROTESILAUS
New Statesman, January 63
Louis Untermeyer THE STONE'S HYMN
Century Magazine, January* 65
Vachel Lindsay THE BABBITT JAMBOUREE
London Mercury, January 66
Molly Anderson Haley THE CHILD JESUS OF PRAGUE
The Forum, New York, January* 67
Mary Austin I HAVE KNOWN POETS
Nation, January* 69
Phyllis Mégroz SONG
Country Life, February 70
Theodore Maynard EARTH-BOUND
Commonweal, February* 71
Padraic Colum DUBLIN ROADS
Irish Statesman, February 73
Edith Sitwell PANOPE
New Republic, February* 76

Walter de la Mare — ENCOUNTER
London Mercury, February 77
Austin Clarke — PILGRIMAGE
Spectator, February 78
Joseph Auslander — ESCAPE
Atlantic Monthly, Boston, March* 81
Kathleen Conyngham Greene — THE SPRING CONQUERS LONDON
New Statesman, March 82
Margaret Widdemer — THE KNIGHT'S RETURN
Harper's Magazine, New York, March* 83
Edmund Blunden — THE WARTONS AND OTHER EARLY ROMANTICS
London Mercury, March 84
Grace Noll Crowell — LIFE–DEATH
Century Magazine, March* 85
V. Sackville–West — THE PERSIAN FLUTE
Country Life, March 87
Harold Munro — RUMOUR
Spectator, March 88
Thomas Hardy — A PRIVATE MAN ON PUBLIC MEN
Daily Telegraph, London, March 89
C. Henry Warren — THE HOUNDS ARE GONE
The Nation and the Athenæum, March 90
Babette Deutsch — SOLILOQUY
Yale Review, April* 92
Humbert Wolfe — ALAN DAVIDSON KEITH
Country Life, April 93
Charles Dalmon — THE JOLLY TINKER
Spectator, April 94
Katharine Tynan — THE MAKER
Irish Statesman, April 95

Harold Lewis Cook THE BARREN TREE
The Dial, April* 96
Richard Church THE MUSICIAN AT REST
Spectator, April 97
Alfred Kreymbourg FROM "SONATA IN BLUE"
Bookman, May* 98
Eden Phillpotts A FRUIT PIECE
Country Life, May 100
Eda Lou Walton WRITTEN IN SAND
American Mercury, New York, May* 101
Siegfried Sassoon ONE WHO WATCHES
London Mercury, May 104
Jan Struther A PARADOX
Spectator, June 105
Robert Hillyer MANORBIER
The Dial, June* 106
Rupert Brooke FAFAÏA
London Mercury, June 111

INTRODUCTION

THAT contemporary poetry is afflicted with poverty has been the discovery of several critics in Great Britain and the U.S.A., made more or less simultaneously during the past twelve months. It is, of course, being made every year, especially by those who cannot write poetry. One critic was so convinced about it that he has proposed in a responsible periodical a "poetic moratorium." He begs poets and would-be poets to give up writing for fifteen years or so. The indirect retort of those at whose expense he endeavours to be facetious is to be found in the pages of this seventh yearly harvesting of contemporary poetry in the public prints of Great Britain, Ireland and America.

The same pages are, their editor feels, a sufficient refutation of the rhymed accusation directed rather more earnestly by a young poet of the U.S.A. against himself and his comrades in the art, that "we are *nice* poets now"–

> And we sip cups of tea, nibble crumpets,
> And we celebrate ninnies and strumpets,
> While the rust bites the throat of the trumpets
> And the ram's horn hangs on the wall;
> And the fifes of the Lord are polluted
> With melodies tickled and tooted
> Out of the stops that once fluted
> Tall silver songs for King Saul.

Readers who began with *The Best Poems of* 1922, and have followed sympathetically the progress of the series year by year, may expect a reference to be

made here to a passage in a recently-published diatribe against "anthologies," by an English poet and colleague, which directly concerns ourselves:–

"All these volumes (*i.e.*, of *The Best Poems of the Year*) are of a uniform size; which gives away the game at once. If there was any real critical interest in their compilation the 1925 volume would have been, perhaps, a thin pamphlet, the 1926 volume a still thinner one, while in 1927 an official announcement might have been issued to subscribers, 'We regret that this year the vintage has failed and no anthology will be printed.' "

The facts will "give away the game at once." *The Best Poems of* 1926 contained 120 pages of verse, the 1927 volume contained 99 pages of verse, and the present volume contains 111 pages of verse. We have not yet arrived at the "thin pamphlet" stage, or the "still thinner one." Nor do we believe that there is any warranty, historical or otherwise, for the assumption (surely as unthinking as that about the possibility of a "moratorium") that the vintage will fail, and render even the thinnest compilation impossible. As another poet has written, a little earlier than last year (the lines "On Reading an Anthology of Modern Verse" were first quoted in these introductory pages three volumes ago)–

> We need not fear! For Beauty shall endure,
> And the old quiet ways seem doubly sure.
> Let the world add this harvest of young dreams
> Of stars and flowers, the moon, the hills and streams
> To the rich bins Shakespeare and Milton crammed,
> Beauty still lives–you little critics be damned!

* * * *

Again the compiler offers cordial and grateful acknowledgment to each of the poets whose work is included in the collection, and to the editors of the various journals in which the poems first appeared, for their ready endorsement of the authors' permissions. Acknowledgment is also offered to the Superintendent of the British Museum reading-room and his staff: and to certain publishers for other help, equally ready and necessary; Messrs. Faber and Gwyer, for example, who have issued Mr. C. Henry Warren's "*The Secret Meadow*" *and other Poems*, in which is printed the piece here reproduced; and Messrs. Macmillan and Company for their permission to include a poem by Thomas Hardy, which is being published in a volume, *Winter Words*, during the month of issue of this compilation.

THOMAS MOULT

WILLIAM H. DAVIES

THE TIME OF DREAMS

WHAT sweet, what happy days had I,
When dreams made Time Eternity!
Before I knew this body's breath
Could not take life in without death.
As fresh as any field of grass
This breath of life was, then; it was
An orchard with more fruit than leaf,
And every owl enjoyed his grief.
No Winter's morn, when I went forth,
Could force on me a sunless North.
When I would watch the bees for hours
Clinging to their love-bitten flowers;
And, dreaming to the songs of birds,
Would still delay my deeds and words;
And every common day could place
A shining Sunday in my face.
O for my greater days to come,
When I shall travel far from home!
On seas that have no shade in sight,
Into the woods that have no light;
Over the mountains' heads so tall,
Cut by the clouds to pieces small;
Across wide plains that give my eye
No house or tree to measure them by.
And all the wonders I shall see
In some old city new to me;
Haunting the ships and docks, and then
To hear the strange seafaring men
That with their broken English prove
More lands than one to roam and love.

What sweet, what happy dreams had I—
When dreams made Time Eternity!

VIOLA GERARD GARVIN

FOR OBERON

UNDER this fern lie Oberon and his queen;
Life, being angry, left death to unite them,
And now the glow-worm, with his lantern green,
Keeps tiny watch alone, lest man should slight
them.

Only the negligent foxglove swings a bell
In little clamour over the quiet grave,
Soothing her beauty whose wan miracle
Enfranchised all, but held the king her slave.

Only the blue kingfisher leaves for token
A sky-entrapping feather at his head
Who grieved in life because her faith was broken,
Knowing there are no pledges for the dead:

And love-in-idleness, remembering,
Still drops enchantment-laden blooms upon her,
Though she is dead, and though in death her king
Has found her love, and kept unstained his honour.

CONRAD AIKEN

FROM "SONNETS"

I

BROAD on the sunburnt hill the bright moon comes,
And cuts with silver horn the hurrying cloud;
And the cold Pole Star, in the dusk, resumes
His last night's light, which light alone could shroud.
And legion other stars, that torch pursuing,
Take each their stations in the deepening night,
Lifting pale tapers for the Watch, renewing
Their glorious foreheads in the Infinite.
Never before had night so many eyes!
Never was darkness so divinely thronged
As now–my love! bright star!–that you arise,
Giving me back that night which I had wronged.
Now with your voice sings all that immortal host,
That god of myriad stars which I thought lost.

* * * * *

VI

What lunacy is this, that night-long tries,
With seven or seventy or ten thousand words,
To compass God in heaven, the loved one's eyes?
Alas! were the whole language changed to birds,
And I Prince Prospero to set them free,
Though I should hide all heaven with beating wings,
Still the essential would escape, still be
Unspoken, dumb, like all essential things.
Love, let me be the beginning world, and grow
To Time from Timelessness, and out of Time
Create magnificent Chaos, and there sow

The immortal stars, and teach those stars to rhyme–
Even so, alas, I could in no sense move
From the begin-all-end-all phrase, "I love."

FRANK DOUGLAS

THE POET ANSWERS HIMSELF

O MISCHIEF was the boy
Who first uncovered Time,
And led him through the years to you
To wrestle with your rhyme.

Said he was Babylon,
And you (in sport) were Greece;
Assailed your heart with boyish art,
And won you to caprice.

For an Olympian day
His laughter fell like rain,
Till ev'ry hour awoke a flower
And lit up your refrain.

Time is a patient friend:
He lingered quietly by,
And slowly fought your chain of thought
With an insidious "why."

At first, in early youth,
You said an insect's wing
Was brave as dawn, and beds of corn
Were jewelled like a king.

Love was a sort of Cupid,
A tangible delight:
And you upreared a God you feared
Out of the secret night.

O Mischief was the boy
To whom the earth was known.
He showed you joys revealed to boys,
And seen by them alone.

Mischief is still a boy,
But grown less frail and wise:
His smile is dawn, his hair is corn;
Jewels are in his eyes.

He's grown too proud for poets;
Love grows remote and chill;
Your gods seem just like other dust
–And Time is chuckling still. . . . .

AFFIRMATION

I

HOW little our true majesty is shown
In these proud minds by which we are confessed
Traitors so often, recreants at best–
Unworthy of life's greatness and our own.
Not by the mind we shall be judged alone,
Who are much more than in the mind is guessed.
By faith we live. The heart in every breast
Labours, believing, toward the end unknown.

Through the shrill mind, in terror and defeat,
The ancient flood of holy being roars;
The gallant heart again and yet again–
Jetting fierce streams of faith–with every beat,
In sacramental affirmation, pours
Life's answer through the unbelieving brain.

II

"And yet at last, when all is said and done,
Where is the triumph, truly–to have been
Spectators of an immemorial scene,
And then hurried into oblivion?"
So speaks the mind, self-cheated, while the one
Splendour in every mind, however mean,
Works out Its purpose secret and serene,
And through all living things under the sun.

His presence is the starry multitude,
And in us also surely He abides:
Our bodies are salt shores for the sharp flood
That through creation rises and subsides
With ebb and flow of everlasting tides
Or rhythms of the perishable blood.

III

Poor timid mind, so agile to defend
Your own misgiving, patient to put out
The light of hope within us and without,
Your own best lover and your own worst friend–
While over us the faithful heavens bend,
While through our veins the justling life streams shout
Triumph and joy, still pondering the old doubt–
Anxious and unpersuaded to the end!

If it be truth indeed that life through you,
Who are the front of her emergent will,
Waking, asks for an answer and, denied,
Resumes the primal sleep–if this be true,
Dark is the truth. But we are greater still
Than our own thoughts, and wiser than our pride.

EDWIN MUIR

THE TRANCE

LULLED by La Belle Dame sans Merci he lies
In the bare wood below the blackening hill.
The plough drives nearer now, the shadow flies
Past him across the plain, but he lies still.

Long since the rust its gardens here has planned,
Flowering his armour like an autumn field.
From his sharp breastplate to his iron hand
A spider's web is stretched, a phantom shield.

When stray feet shake the ground beside his ear,
Armies pass through his dream in endless line,
And one by one his ancient friends appear;
They pass all day but he can make no sign.

When a bird cries within the silent grove,
The long-lost voice fleets past, he makes to rise
And follow it; but his limbs do not move,
And on the ground unstirred his shadow lies.

But if a tiny leaf should drift
Across his face and lie, the dread drops start
Chill on his forehead. Now he tries to lift
The insulting weight that stays and breaks his heart.

RICHARD LE GALLIENNE

ACHERON

OH let me write of Acheron,
That river out of the black sun,
Where hearts no longer feel or break,
Or beat for some tall beauty's sake;
But where there delicately glide,
Upon that sedgy riverside,
Pale, lonely wraiths that once could love
In the green meadows there above,
Where the long grasses bend and swing.

There might I meet that darksome king
Who is the last and fearful friend,
Who lays his hand on you and smiles,
And says, "Beloved, 'tis the end!"
And, oh, the Queen Persephone,
That sits beside him on his throne,
He stole by the Ægean Sea,
A flower 'mid flowers all alone!

DOROTHY PARKER

THE HOMEBODY

THERE still are kindly things for me to know
Who am afraid to dream, afraid to feel–
This little chair of scrubbed and sturdy deal,
This easy book, this fire, sedate and slow.
And I shall stay with them, nor cry my woe
Of wounds across my breast that do not heal,
Nor wish that Beauty drew a duller steel
Since I am sworn to meet her as a foe.

It may be, when the devil's own time is done,
That I shall hear the dropping of the rain
At midnight, and lie quiet in my bed;
Or stretch and straighten to the yellow sun,
Or face the turning tree, and have no pain;
So shall I learn at last my heart is dead.

JOHN DRINKWATER

FROM "PERSEPHONE"

THEY call me now to the Athenian plains,
Green buds from Salamis to Marathon,
Time tells the barren branches that the pains
Of frost are gone,
And all the spring now waits a word from me,
Persephone.

Along the Danube and the Volga now
Forests of blossom tremble to release
Upon my touch, knowing that Enna's vow
Shall bring them peace,
Fulfilment, laughter, under my caress,
Their prophetess.

Ceres, my mother, waits. In the dark days
She has been tending all the buried roots,
Hearing afar the wagons, and the praise
Of loaded fruits,
And in my blessing only may they be,
Persephone.

Now Pan is keeping with his burdened ewes,
Telling them that I come for their content,
And through a million sheepfolds now the news
Singing is sent
How all his shepherd's promise, word by word,
In Hell is heard.

The lilies and the primroses are ready,
Violets and hyacinths and daffodils,
Snowdrops and crocuses, to greet their lady,
In valleys, on the hills,
By rivers, in the woods, along the sea,
Persephone.

On many a marble crowned acropolis,
The citizens are come to festival;
I hear them cry–"Where is the bride of Dis,
Now winter's fall
Leaves every altar waiting on her spring
For garlanding?"

By reeded pools, along the water meadows,
Under the warmer eaves, in dusky brakes,
The sun has soothed away the winter shadows,
And wings and wakes
The pretty birds to song on every tree–
"Persephone!"

"Persephone! Persephone! Persephone!"
The budding year makes music of my name;
I am the word, the touch, the melody,
The sign and flame
Of earth's expectancy, her spirit and dress
Of loveliness.

So for a little, lover and lord, farewell–
About Hell's gate the swallows are in flight,
And I must go. But earth again will tell
Her winter night,
And homing to your kisses you shall see
Persephone.

JOHN GOULD FLETCHER

THE UNFAMILIAR HOUSE

TO an unfamiliar house once more these feet have wandered,
That set forth on the road so many years gone by.
And once again as stranger have I pondered
On the serene blue depths of an unfamiliar sky.
Here where a dead youth passed, unspent yet shattered,
I walk my roads neglected once again,
And whether that strange past or the nearer past much mattered
I do not know. Here am I loosed from pain.

Between me and the boy that held forlornly to his vision
Now stands a lofty shining unsurmountable wall;
I stare at it in vain–neither sympathy nor derision
Alters its mass at all.
The oak trees stand as they have stood, unchanging,
The dumb stretch of the dusky sun-browned earth
Still breathes in brooding harmony with all my hopes, far-ranging,
As on that ever-vanished day when time first brought me birth.

And people come. They still have kept their places
In which they stood a dozen years ago;
But when I grasp their hands and stare into their faces
They seem more strange than once of old: I know
That time and the years sift wrinkles: now I wonder

What lasts between us, changing day on day.
Once and for all my fate was this, to live though torn asunder
From all I might have shared–there is no other way.

And when I pass, from a dark hearthstone going,
Blue in the rosy dusk the hickory-smoke will glide:
But I will be borne from it on the flowing
Drift of a darker tide.
No more than smoke can I blur still these blue skies' changeless splendour,
No more than a faint blue cloud of smoke within these hearts I last.
The mirror fronts me, frozen, cold, untender,
There are no ghosts left now; the past is but the past.

SHAEMAS O'SHEEL

THIS IS OUR DOOM

A SLENDER sheaf-straw, straw and a few poppies,
For all the labour of our days.
A few dreams, dreams troubled and elusive,
Though the nights are long.
Ashes, our hearts at last a handful of ashes,
And yet their flames
Light such a little space in the dusk of Time.

This is the doom of those whose desire is unbounded,
To feel in the dark
The wall insurmountable,
To hear beyond hearing the song that shall never be heard,
To see beyond seeing the picture that shall not be painted:
To sense forever,
In wind and water,
In wood and meadow,
In city and solitude,
More than the heart can hold or the mind encompass.
This is our doom, we weavers of Time's pale garlands,
To seek forever and find not the Rood and the Rose,
The Lips and the Grail that beckon us in our dreams.

BURIAL

AS when we wake from some enchanted sleep,
Dear sleep deep-folded sombrous layer on layer,
As when we wake from some enchanted deep
Forgetfulness and taste the fragrant air,
Finding it fresh again and sharp with bloom,
And colour heightened, and new sound begot,
So was the sense of water in that room
In some high-hilled September long forgot:
And Faring listened and he laughed aloud,
Making no slightest movement in his shroud.

In the gray dawn, silence perturbing him, he lay
Dreaming before the moment of the sun,
The lengthening moment when the leaves are stirred, and day
Breaks with its touch the webs that night has spun.
The damp sweet mouths of field and forest clung,
The house was still, save for a creaking stair,
The cheeping of the sparrows clicked and hung
Upon the muted rhythm of the air;
And far off with a choked and angry cry
A cock assailed the flaming of the sky.

Faring, his fever ebbing, knew again
On slender trails the bending firs immersed,
Rivers that ran from misty rain to rain
And cooled his lips when they were young with thirst
Drowsily water fell in soundless sound,
Wetting the moss and nodding columbine;

The sunlight shot its arrows to the ground,
And stooped to pick them up beneath the pine.
Faring grew happier and raised his head;
The waiting nurse stepped forward–he was dead.

Not wholly . . . in the going, and the going,
Between the apparent end and ultimate breath,
Lingers a little time we know, unknowing,
Before the new dead feel aright with death;
That dusk his wife saw Faring's face so clear,
Outside the window where the garden ran,
She knew not if she felt a joy or fear
At this so perfect symbol of a man.
Faring was listening, rigid in surmise,
But there was smiling wonder in his eyes.

Down in the garden where the heady rose
Turns black and humble with the coming eve,
And those fine August blossoms, spiked and close,
The marigold and yellow zinnia weave
Their thick brocade, where now the herbal hour
Was pungent with their scent, and dew, and grass,
Faring had walked and touched each lovèd flower,
Musing on this amazement come to pass.
A small mist hid the moon above the trees,
The privet did not bend for Faring's knees.

Would he come back? This rose, this marigold,
this hedge!
Ah, it was good to be unleashed of pain,
And those fantastic shapes who'd held the ledge
Narrow and perilous where he had lain!
Would he come back? He paused again and peered;

She sat, his wife, so pale and ſtill and ſtaring,
He sighed, for this was all that he had feared;
She thought the sheeted thing up-ſtairs was Faring.
Faring the great, the gay, the debonair,
Yearned even for that bewildered friendship, there.

"Much as she knows of me," he thought, "she ſtill
would lie,
And for the memory of love would hide,
Rather than ſtrip me naked to the sky,
The juſt and naked anger of her pride.
Rather than strip me naked?" Faring took
Between his hands a twiſted lily ſtalk,
The day was spent and he had ſtill to look
For some defence should bright archangels talk.
"I shall be blind and all confused with wonder;
I muſt make haſte–and ponder–ponder."

Above the trees the night-jar's crying whirred,
Wounding the silence with a shaft of noise,
There fell no shadow, but his wife had ſtirred
And raised her head as if she heard a voice.
"Poorheart!" said Faring, "let your pulses dance,
This is a day, and soon a day is over,
Think on your freedom and of new romance,
I know the heart, and the heart is ever a rover.
Poorheart!" . . . He muſt make haſte. Remember,
How clear the water ran in that September?

Faring had had no empty minute; time
Was short between the human and sublime.

First and foremost, neat and amorous,
Twinkling ankles, starchily glamorous,
Painted cheeks and prettily thin,
Beside his bed the nurse had been,
Felt of his pulse and said: "That's that";
Thinking of her wedding hat.
"Lord, it's been a tiresome case.
Must have been a handsome face."
Faring smiled, but no one knew:
How sweet, how cool the smell of dew!
How full of summer hot and crisp,
The curtains with their sliding lisp.
Nieces, nephews, undertakers,
Handkerchiefs . . . the sobbing fakers!
"That's a mighty fine man, Jim.
We'll make a wonderful corpse of him."
. . . "Poorheart–lean down, lean down beside me.
You see me smile? You cannot chide me.
Pretty lips cannot command
This curious mystery, large and bland.
Now I have really run away.
Poorheart . . . laugh, laugh, you'll soon recover,
I know the heart, and it's ever a rover.
Would I could stroke your shining hair.
I weep, I weep to make you sorrow,
But dry your tears, there'll be to-morrow.
. . . Sweetheart, isn't water odd?
Like some confused and murmuring god."
Damn these nephews, nieces, aunts,
Damn their slow macabre dance!
Yes, he'd left them all his money.
Lots for bread, and even honey.
Couldn't they let him lie and dream

Of sunlight on a coppiced stream?
Couldn't they let him watch a pool
Turn his face young again and cool?

Ten hours gone . . . ten hours hence:
The night grew heavier. . . . No defence.

"What did you say, you great archangel . . . what?
Must I explain each folly wild and hot;
Must I recall each cruelty in taking
From other men the stolen gold they'd got?
Dreams did not start that way, but lest I die
I rode the wild colt world and did the breaking.
Yes, I have loved kind arms and radiant flesh,
And lips that cut the night and healed it, too;
Was I then born a man to never know
The ecstasy the strange unknown makes fresh?
If I have had my fill, so have my lovers,
But I have judged them not. . . And you?"
Faring drew breath–a night-jar called–he raised his head;
"You fool," said Faring to himself, "you're dead.
You fool to waste your time; you wasteful fool!"
Soundless the water fell, and cool.

"Why I have been a brother to the wind,
Brother of hills I have forsworn, forsaken;
Why I have found the sunlight tall and kind,
And all night long the planets overtaken.
Why, I have known that death rose from the earth,
And went back again, and came out again, as birth."

Soundless the water fell in lost September:
"If you would hold me guilty," Faring said, "*you*
must remember."

Somewhere are rivers lonely and forgot,
Save by the clouds and early rush of wings,
That year by year each hour by hour are shot
With changing beauty and amazing springs;
And autumn flecked with leaves, and deep, and
brown;
And winter wrapped in iridescent white;
And in the summer August tumbling down
Makes a great sound of fulness in the night.
And these are never old, and never new,
And never begin, nor ending, ever through.

Soundless the water fell in a September,
High-hilled and lost, but now recalled again,
And drowsily, drowsily Faring could remember
Rivers that ran from misty rain to rain.
Soundless the water fell . . . he raised his head;
Who was this man who muttered of the dead?

It had turned cold; it was no longer night but noon;
And Faring wished they would be ended soon.

"Hear then my prayers, O Lord,
Man walketh in vain shadow and in vain. . . ."
What was that dropping . . . earth? It fell like rain.
"Forasmuch in his wise providence. . . ." Sod?
Was this then God?
Yes, it was God,
And so the tall straight tree,
And all the upper dainty merciful green;

This darkness, too. "At whose second coming in
glorious majesty to judge the world,
The earth and the sea shall give up their dead;
And the corruptible bodies of those who sleep in
him
Shall be changed, and made like his own
Glorious body."
Glorious body? These were prayers!
His body was glorious with all subtle airs,
And all the subtle changing hues of light,
And all the subtle mystery of night;
The subtle largeness of the stars outlined
Within the subtle smallness of the mind.
His glorious body–Faring's was the same,
And so the deathless spirit's tiny flame.
"Almighty and everliving God. . . "
Faring could remember
Only the sound of water in September,
But smiled to hear the spades strike sharp and
rough,
Knowing the sound of water was enough.

LOUIS GOLDING

A SPRINGTIME LOST

HOW I have lost the Spring this year,
This different Spring from all the Springs;
For there is never a bird that sings
The same song as a bird before
Sang on any tree.
And no stream ever a second time
Sang a last year's rhyme.

And I have seen no catkins stir
Their furry fingers curiously,
Nor thrush hide, nor skylark soar
Where gross eyes cannot see,
Nor this thing, nor that thing
That whips the blood in the good Spring,
Nor that thing, nor this thing,
Whereof I use to sing;
I have not seen cowslip unfold
Out of pale mist to dewy gold,
Nor heard the tides of mayflower seethe
Nor the elm-buds disrupt their sheath.

And now the year's great axis wheels,
And Summer now is at my heels.
And Summer soon must be a ghost
To him that mourns a Springtime lost.
And he that did the Springtime lose
Winter shall bind him in a noose,
Till Winter too must abrogate
The sceptre of his white estate.

And then the Spring shall once more come
To this green land which is his home,
And I–
You bid me then take care?
Prithee, good sir!
Spring shall not take me unaware!

DAVID MORTON

LOVERS

NOW tell me, what are we in this brief hour
Of a rapt radiance trembling toward the night,
Eternal and as delicate as a flower,
Compounded half of darkness, half of light–
Wherein all forms are phantom . . . tree and wall,
And whitening bush, and you and I, as well . . .
O, you and I, the least secure of all,
Could find no cry to pierce that brooding spell.

I tell you that we have no part in this,
We, with our speeches of brief, broken worth,
Our momentary groping for dear hands–
What are our hurried kisses to this kiss
Of slow, eternal light that takes the earth,
Forgetful of all lovers in all lands?

K. FORD

THE OLD SPINET

LIKE moonlight falling on a city street,
Softening the harsh and garish things of day,
Is thy faint voice when fingers lightly stray
Over the yellow keys. Jangled and sweet
The old-world melodies and measures beat,
Some plaintive as an evening breeze, some gay
As little streams that down the hillside play,
Some mellow as the sun upon ripe wheat.

A brazen jazz band clangs the latest song,
Dancers like marionettes with measured tread
Move in and out, and round, a dizzy throng
From whose dull souls the love of thee has fled.
I steal away to hear thy voice among
The ghosts of those who loved thee, and are dead.

RICHARD ELY MORSE

"THIS SWAN"

THIS swan, upon the icy waters of my heart,
sails night and day;
reflected amid the drift of tarnished wood-leaves,
desolate and gray.

Bending his plumèd, silver-shining neck he seeks
in baffled love
that shadowed apparition always vanishing
from him above.

And now he moves his head in spectral bitterness,
to assuage his pain
darting it beneath the calm of silver which shatters,
and forms again.

There is no escape, only the mocking image
of the mirrored swan
beneath him sails, under a moon long turned to
stone,
for ever on.

THE DOUBLE FORTRESS

TIME, wouldst thou hurt us? Never shall we grow old.
Break as thou wilt these bodies of blind clay,
Thou canst not touch us here, in our stronghold,
Where two, made one, laugh all thy powers away.

Though ramparts crumble and rusty gates grow thin,
And our brave fortress dwine to a hollow shell,
Thou shalt hear heavenly laughter, far within,
Where, young as Love, two hidden lovers dwell.

We shall go clambering up our twisted stairs
To watch the moon through rifts in our grey towers.
Thou shalt hear whispers, kisses, and sweet prayers
Creeping through all our creviced walls like flowers.

Wouldst wreck us, Time? When thy dull leaguer brings
The last wall down, look heavenward. We have wings.

R. N. D. WILSON

SAINT APOLLINARE IN CLASSE

THIS is God's hive; the bees
of Hybla never stored
ripe honey, such as these
rich walls afford.

Thought swarmed here once; the stark
Thebaid brake its comb,
and poured out of the dark
wild honey to Rome.

Then, as of old,
the skies of Patmos dipt:
very gold of very gold
glowed in the crypt,

and flawless, lit with green
cool light as from a wave,
the sea-veined cipolline
pillared the nave.

What sweetness ventured thus
to tempt Theology,
to build her such a house?
or set the daring bee

so wide to rove, that men
have never wholly lost
the gold that clustered then
about the Host?

NORTH LIBRARY

VIRGINIA LYNE TUNSTALL

OH CHERISH BEAUTY

OH cherish beauty, for her foes beleaguer
Her fortresses, and take them one by one,
Insatiate of spoil, insanely eager
To rout her final bright battalion.
Her woods which shook with April's starry laughter,
And pinned their scarlet on October's breast,
Are vanishing, the wild bird follows after,
Winging to silence from an empty nest.
The sea, her lover once, can give her only
A refuge where its farthest tides recede,
And solitudes which held her, proud and lonely,
Offer no more their temples for her need.
Harassed, forlorn, who can deny her then
Her sanctuary in the hearts of men?

ROY CAMPBELL

TRISTAN DA CUNHA

SNORE in the foam: the night is vast and blind,
The blanket of the mist around your shoulders,
Sleep your old sleep of rock, snore in the wind,
Snore in the spray! The storm your slumber lulls,
His wings are folded on your nest of boulders
As on their eggs the grey wings of your gulls.

No more as when, ten thousand years ago,
You hissed a giant cinder from the ocean–
Around your rocks you furl the shawling snow,
Half sunk in your own darkness, vast and grim,
And round you on the deep with surly motion
Pivot your league-long shadow as you swim.

Why should you haunt me thus but that I know
My surly heart is in your own displayed,
Round whom such wastes in endless circuit flow,
Whose hours in such a gloomy compass run–
A dial with its league-long arm of shade
Slowly revolving to the moon and sun.

My heart has sunk, like your grey fissured crags,
By its own strength o'ertoppled and betrayed:
I too have burned the wind with fiery flags,
Who now am but a roost for empty words–
An island of the sea whose only trade
Is in the voyages of its wandering birds.

Did you not, when your strength became your pyre,
Deposed and tumbled from your flaming tower,

Awake in gloom from whence you sank in fire
To find Antaeus-like, more vaſtly grown,
A throne in your own darkness, and a power
Sheathed in the very coldness of your ſtone?

Your ſtrength is that you have no hope or fear,
You march before the world without a crown:
The nations call you back, you do not hear:
The cities of the earth grow grey behind you,
You will be there when their great flames go down
And ſtill the morning in the van will find you.

You march before the continents: you scout
In front of all the earth: alone you scale
The maſthead of the world, a lorn look-out,
Waving the snowy flutter of your spray
And gazing back in infinite farewell
To suns that sink, and shores that fade away.

From your grey tower what long regrets you fling
To where, along the low horizon burning,
The great swan-breasted seraphs soar and sing,
And suns go down, and trailing splendours dwindle,
And sails on lonely errands unreturning,
Glow with a gold no sunrise can rekindle.

Turn to the Night, these flames are not for you
Whose ſteeple for the thunder swings its bells:
Grey Memnon, to the tempeſt only true,
Turn to the night, turn to the shadowing foam,
And let your voice, the saddeſt of farewells,
With sullen curfew toll the grey wings home.

The wind your mournful syren haunts the gloom:
The rocks, spray-clouded, are your signal-guns
Whose ſtony nitre, puffed with flying ſpume,
Rolls forth in grim salute your broadside hollow,
Over the gorgeous burials of suns,
To sound the tocsin of the storms that follow.

Plunge forward; like a ship to battle hurled,
Slip the long cables of the failing light,
The level rays that moor you to the world:
Sheathed in your armour of eternal froſt,
Plunge forward, in the thunder of the fight
To lose yourself as I would fain be loſt.

Exiled, like you, and severed from my race
By the cold ocean of my own disdain,
Do I not freeze in such a wintry space,
Do I not travel through a ſtorm as vaſt
And rise at times, victorious from the main,
To fly the sunrise at my shattered maſt?

Your path is but a desert where you reap
Only the bitter knowledge of your soul,
You fish with nets of seaweed in the deep
As fruitlessly as I with nets of rhyme,
Yet forth you ſtride: yourself the way, the goal,
The surges are your ſtrides, your path is time.

Hurled by what aim to what tremendous range!
A missile from the great sling of the paſt
Your passage leaves its track of death and change
And ruin on the world: you fly beyond,
Leaping the current of the ages vaſt
As lightly as a pebble skims a pond.

The years are undulations in your flight
Whose awful motion we can only guess:
Too swift for sense, too terrible for sight,
We only know how fast behind you darken
Our days like lonely beacons of distress:
We know that you stride on and will not harken.

Now in the eastern sky the fairest planet
Pierces the dying wave with dangled spear,
And in the whirring hollows of your granite
That vaster Sea, to which you are a shell,
Sighs with a ghostly rumour like the drear
Moan of the nightwind in a hollow cell.

We shall not meet again: over the wave
Ours ways divide, and yours is straight and endless–
But mine is short and crooked to the grave:
Yet what of these dark crowds, amid whose flow
I battle like a rock, aloof and friendless–
Are not their generations, vague and endless,
The waves, the strides, the feet on which I go?

STEPHEN VINCENT BENÉT

AMERICAN NAMES

I HAVE fallen in love with American names,
The sharp gaunt names that never get fat,
The snakeskin-titles of mining-claims,
The plumed war-bonnet of Medicine Hat,
Tueson and Deadwood and Lost Mule Flat.

Seine and Piave are silver spoons,
But the spoonbowl-metal is thin and worn,
There are English counties like hunting-tunes
Played on the keys of a postboy's horn,
But I will remember where I was born.

I will remember Carquinez Straits,
Little French Lick and Lundy's Lane,
The Yankee ships and the Yankee dates
And the bullet-towns of Calamity Jane.
I will remember Skunktown Plain.

I will fall in love with a Salem tree
And a rawhide quirt from Santa Cruz,
I will get me a bottle of Boston sea
And a blue-gum nigger to sing me blues.
I am tired of loving a foreign muse.

Rue des Martyrs and Bleeding-Heart Yard,
Senlis, Pisa, and Blindman's Oast,
It is a magic ghost you guard
But I am sick for a newer ghost,
Harrisburg, Spartanburg, Painted Post.

Henry and John were never so
And Henry and John were always right?
Granted, but when it was time to go
And the tea and the laurels had stood all night,
Did they never watch for Nantucket Light?

I shall not rest quiet in Montparnasse.
I shall not lie easy at Winchelsea.
You may bury my body in Sussex grass,
You may bury my tongue at Chaupmédy.
I shall not be there. I shall rise and pass.
Bury my heart at Wounded Knee.

JOHN FREEMAN

A VISIT TO THOMAS HARDY

THE Roman road runs by the wall
And Roman shards and remnants lie
Under the turf where dry leaves fall
On leaves long dry.
Bracelet and bowl, and naked bones,
In Resurrection's sad amaze
Staring amid long-buried stones,
Take the sun's gaze.
And here, with talk of times forgot,
The times forgot come back renewed;
Rise Roman shapes above the plot
Their bones endued.
I shut my lids and straightway hear
A Roman voice–it is my host's;
I look, and from his eyes there peer
A Roman ghost's;
In his hand clasp a Roman hand,
In his verse hear the ancient tone
Heard once in accents harsh or bland
By ears now stone.
Time spins back, and a wave of the past
Streams through each idle sense's portal;
And while long little minutes last
I touch the immortal.

W. FORCE STEAD

HYMN TO DEMETER

EARTH, mother of all, kind earth,
Hear my prayer,
You called her out of your being,
Sweet, sweet, and so fair;
Why have you set behind her the shadow
Of my despair?

She goes about the world as the sun
Goes round the sky,
Giving the hills their clear-cut lines,
But always nigh
Her trails a shadow in pools of light,
And it is I.

She is more lovely than a daffodil
By a stone wall,
I gaze on her for hours and hours,
Until I fall
Into a trance and worship her;
Earth, mother of all,

You are a spirit, ground of our wisdom,
You could foresee
That I would arise, too, out of your bosom;
Let it not be
That all my longing should end in nothing,–
Give her to me!

Then I, the shadow, shall be a day
  All sun and shine;
You shall enjoy a flowering forth
  In this love of mine;
Our love will be a whole field of flowers
  And a fruitful vine.

Mother of all, your ancient love,
  In us reborn,
Will be birds nesting, leaves budding,
  Midsummer corn,
Your autumn apple, the red berry
  On a winter thorn.

Old ballads tell, when lovers died,
  How their desire
Sprang from the grave and twined together
  A rose and a briar:
O wait not till we are cold, but now,
  In the heat of the fire,

Let us be molten down and run together,
  She and I!
Our love will sparkle as a sun uprising
  And dapple the sky
With the brightest dawn that has ever dawned,
  Before we die.

W. FORCE STEAD

THE HAWTHORN BOUGH

SWEET hawthorn, if I break thy bough,
It is not that I would deny
Thy April time of blossom now,
Or autumn fruitage, bye-and-bye.

I came to thee and stood amazed,
I said, What life looks out of thee?
Back to me eyes of Argus gazed,
Thy many faces facing me.

O sweet upon the air thy breath;
Thy blossoms, wide-awake, express
A surge of life that flourisheth
Out of earth's innate loveliness.

Thou inward light, too long suppressed,
A bursting forth of joy thou art;
White flame of God made manifest,
I worship thee with all my heart.

So I would bear one stem away;
Come home with me, sweet hawthorn bough;
For I have many things to say,
But know not how to say them now.

HAMISH MACLAREN

THE UNIVERSAL TAVERN

I PRAY you, all
You tiny things
That creep and crawl
And flit on wings,

That flute and hum,
In satins drest,
Think not I come
But as your guest.

You grasshoppers
Whose song is heard
On evening airs:
You ladybird

In crimson blouse,
Fly not, nor fret;
Unless your house
Is burning yet.

You silvery shrews
Seek not your holes;
What news, what news,
You velvet voles?

Nay, fear him not
Who would find out
Your ways, and what
You think about.

Sweet Jenny Wren
  Where will you flit
At evening when
  The stars are lit?

Flute, atom! Tell
  How you employ
Star-hours–as well,
  Green frog, ahoy!

You secret bats
  That haunt old oaks,
In hooded hats
  And russet cloaks:

Laborious ants
  That seem so wise,
What are *your* wants?
  And all you flies,

In falling dews,
  On flowery downs,
Adonis blues
  And meadow browns?

You whorled snails,
  And shells of the sea–
What tales, what tales
  Have you for me?

All watery forms,
  Newts, gnats untold,
And dim land-worms
  With lamps of gold:

All bees: all moths
  On silver wings,
Mystic as Goths
  And crowned like kings,

Monk-moths in cowls
  Whose chant ascends:
You smallë fowles,
  Dan Chaucer's friends

On twig, in air,
  Pipe, chirrup, crow–
That I may share
  Your dreams, and know

Your wisdom's pearls,
  Your dancing joys–
Like tiny girls,
  Like tiny boys.

CREDITORS

ONE or two have lived and died
Made the world worth living in.
But to think of them is pride
Sets the heart above its din.

Not the ones with ringing names–
They are legends that display
Something raised them o'er the flames
That, in warming, crack our clay.–

But the casual wayfarers
Who, though little met or known,
Have such gifts and graces theirs
That our minds become their throne.

By some freedom in the gait,
Turn of head, or fearlessness,
They, beyond their estimate,
Blunt the edge of our distress.

By some token in the eye,
They in all their doing, give;
Make us not forget we die,
But rejoice that yet we live.

Many such, not beautiful
(Save in mind–nor wholly there),
Make this life's dark duty full
For that moment when their hair

Gave point to a pointless crowd
Or they spoke, or did not, till
Our hearts rise to cry aloud;
Cry one moment, then be still.

D. S. LEONARD

NOT HERE

WHAT mockery is this? How many times
I start to see you looking down on me!
Perhaps it is some trick of light that mimes
Your face so truthfully?

Perhaps distorted fancy fashions you
Darkly, gigantically, behind that chair:
So that you stand, just as you used to do,
With that calm resolute air–

Setting the old emotions which have lain
Dormant, through long repression, suddenly free;
Oh! for the cool firm touch of your hands again
Quietly possessing me!

I reach towards you–and your outlines grow
To empty formless shadows, and your face
Disintegrates, and all your features go
Into the depths of space.

I am alone now; and the still, still room
Fills me with sudden undetermined fear.
How strange! I could have sworn that through the gloom–
Yet there is no-one here.

HERBERT E. PALMER

NEW HOPE FOR SOME

IN THE BODY AND OUT OF IT

(*In Irish mythology the Fairies are not only fallen, outcast angels, but also lonely spirits between two worlds, since, though expelled from Heaven, they were not bad enough to find a home in Hell. Insects are their servants.*)

WHEN I am no more thought of,
Though I'm little thought of now,
When nobody will praise me,
And nobody will bow,
I'll creep into the garden upon my hands and knees
And sing a song of Jesus beneath the currant trees;
And each shiny bug and beetle, the earwigs and the snails,
Those little outlaw people whom not a tongue bewails,
Those glinty outlaw people who neither laugh nor cry,
Perpetual as the dust-motes and lonely as the sky,
Will run and tell the fairies that here's the Voice of Pain
To hew a way to Heaven and get them home again,
Will run and tell the fairies that here's the thing they craved,
That nought and nought make twenty, and strangest folk are saved,
Will throng upon my shoulders and swarm across my knees,
And crown me King of Magic beneath the currant trees.

HERBERT E. PALMER

TRIUMPH SONG

THE manacles fallen, the spikes of the barrier crossed,
The dragon defeated, hewed open from jawbone to tail;
And you that were captive, and penned in a dungeon, and lost,
Ride westwards triumphant, your eyes on the light of the grail.

No prison has bars that the strength of man's mind may not burst;
Though he grovel in darkness their might he shall stoutly assail;
And the Weak shall be strong, and the maimed of the dungeons be first
In the day when Man's Spirit uprises to balance the scale.

So you ride 'neath the shield of the Sun and the helm of the Moon;
You speed through the walls of the wind and the fence of the rain.
And the cold of the moor to you now is beneficent boon
Who are free as the curlew to conquer its wildness again.

F. R. HIGGINS

THE SCRIBE

ARISE, Saint Aodh, and find, on rising
From that stone bed and quilt of rain,
Your fish-plate laden by the otter,
While dormice glean your share of grain.

Come slip your penknife, slice the white quill,
Bless your vellum, then design,
In inks of heather-top and holly,
The glitterings of holy minds.

Here moss and still prayer hush your green house;
No candle saddens that cold floor,
But water holds your stretch of daylight,
Till moonlight stands inside your door.

Clouds, blurring out deep mountain bushes,
Smooth waters, turning not a wave,
Have steeped your island in a silence,
Greyer than the heron's shade.

Then rob still heaven of its secrets;
O, give us then, in earth's green name,
Dark knowledge from a listening forest,
Grey wisdom from a day's pale flame!

MARK VAN DOREN

DESERTED HOLLOW

THIS valley sends another sound
Than was delivered of its rocks
When they were seized and set around
The cloven feet of little flocks.
The sheep were taken long ago,
And fences wait a wilder foe.

There is no hushing of the wind
Between the blows of axes now.
No breathless timber-lengths are pinned
And shingled fast to make a mow.
There is not one expectant eye
Upon the purpose of the sky.

It was a race of silent men
That taught the clouds to hesitate–
If only to upgather then
A blacker heaven-full of hate.
Riders up and down divided
Weather since grown single-sided.

Winds that strike upon these stones
Hear not an angry voice among them.
They have smothered their old moans
Against the hairy hands that wrung them.
Boulders, grass, and border-trees
Supinely harken. Fences freeze

And crumble wider every spring;
They will yet be flat again.
There is not a wilful thing
In all this patient mountain-pen.
There is only the dead sound
Of slowly unresisting ground.

WILLIAM ALEXANDER PERCY

RECOGNITION

QUIETLY, silently passing, at twilight, when streets are crowded,
Ah, the faces I see, the sad beautiful faces of men,
With the haze of their dreams or their love or their sorrow tenderly on them,
With the charmed wistful shadows and hollows on cheek and temple,
Strangers to me, passing from dark into dark, unreturning!
Would I could lay on their twilight lids the kiss of peace,
But they pass, and I can only call after them "Brother, brother."

ULYSSES

DIP me in Lethe, that I may forget,
O Gods, the shining gifts your malice tore
From me who ever gave you praise. Ah, let
Me not remember what is mine no more!

The long years leave no trace upon these sands
Where beats the severing sea. Unchanging lies
The wide horizon. Only on these strong hands
Age falls, on this proud head, and dims these
watching eyes.

Now Ilion's heroes sit in their high halls.
Their hearts have homing, and their mighty arms
Have rest from battle. Theirs to heed the calls
Of love, to tell their deeds, to drink the cup that
warms,

While quenchless laughter mingles with the song
Of many minstrels. Ah, were I but one
In such a company to tell my long
Amazing tale, what I have seen, what done,

Would take long telling. Revelry would cease,
While revelers drank my story from my lips–
Journeys that yielded wisdom but no peace,
No safe and glad return. . . . Gone now my ships,

Gone my companions whom I loved and led
Through strange and wild adventures o'er the deep
Which holds them slumber-locked in its wide bed,
Their long wayfaring done. Soft be their sleep

Within the cradling waters, sweet their dreams!
Sweeter than mine who mourn them, lost to life
And yet not dead; dwelling with ghostly gleams
Of hope, visions of home, and memories of strife.

I have braved Hades and the wailing shades,
Baffled great Scylla, fled the honeyed kiss
Of sorceress and siren, cheated the hungry blades
Of men, and borne the wrath of gods–for this:

To waste in idleness upon a shore
Unknown to ships, to wear my life away
In friendless exile, yearning evermore
Toward Hellas, while day follows dragging day.

Oh, I am sick of silence and slow rust!
Oh, I am sick of longing and regret!
Hear me, O Gods–my heart is in the dust–
Dip me in Lethe, that I may forget.

R. ELLSWORTH LARSSON

THREE PAGES FOR AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY

(For G. B. D.)

I

listen

in the bleak
season
I have heard
after the final
dissonance of notes
fumbled by all four winds
as a full
dull chord of freezing silence
quick to drop from high
immemorably thick leavage
of the night
like the twitching
body of an ape
the word
pronounced
as memory of a word
once heard

heard and foreseen embedded in
some undated day as final basis
of a quickly bent
spent arc of sharp
infinitesimal progress
through the dark

II

listen

in the bleak season
I have heard
after the final
dissonance of notes
fumbled by all
four winds
a word

with only
sudden thickening of heart
and only sudden shuffling of
the step
as sign of the event

III

listen

in these decaying
days
in these bleak seasons
when the flesh
unmeshed falls from me
flake by flake
as light falls from the walls
of this
my discontented house

not to
the gods

the words that have
as rind and symbol
this carved
unsigned undated stone
do I
make incantations
but in the marrow
of my narrow house
and in the marrow
of my bone
alone I conjure as a song
all long
drawn secret syllables that are
the magic of your name
and when the flesh has fallen
to the core
your name shall be more freely
in the rarer
altitudes than air

until
it shall again recall
all atoms of my flesh about it
as inevitable core

IV

and in
the morning then
I came

the world

collapsed about me
like a tent
in which I ran and rattled
loosely like one lone
closecurled closefurled
and closezoned thought
within an empty brain

and in
the morning then
I came

bringing
my ashes warmly in an urn
again
O yet yet yet again
immortally to bury them
in the deep
and fragrant forests of your name

W. H. DAVIES

HEAVEN AND EARTH

IT may be true that stars are worlds,
And twenty times the earth in size;
But all I know, or care to know,
Is in the limit of my eyes.
Which proves that any star can see
Her face in one small drop of dew;
And that the Moon, the lovely Moon,
With half her heaven of stars in view,
Can see their beauty, all in full,
Down in one little wayside pool.

ELIZABETH COATSWORTH

NOW AUTUMN IS HERE

NOW Autumn is here I yearn for a Roman villa
(A villa and peace!)
With mosaics of grapevines twined with the leopards of Bacchus
And a bronze faun from Greece
Standing jocund and drunk in the midst of a modest fountain
Where the slow-moving carp
Nose the water to circles of ripples as thin and as silver
As the strings of a harp.

How pleasant to sit in a peristyle wide to the sun
But walled from the breeze,
And to smell the fragrance of grape swelling sweet from the press,
And see over the trees
An arrow of wild geese flying–how pleasant to smile
And, sighing, write down
A word of regret and content, engraved on wax tablets,
To some friend in the town.

F. L. LUCAS

THE ELMS OF PROTESILAUS

THEY laid Protesilaus to his sleep
Beside the Hellespont: there long ago
Out of his dust where now the peasants reap,
Twin elm-trees used to grow.

Set by the nymphs, and taller in their pride
Than all the trees of Hellas. Day by day
Their boughs climb'd upward till their tops espied
The fields where once Troy lay–

And straightway withered. Spring by spring they grew
And died, and grew, and died: so bitter yet
The dead man's anguish–as if the dumb wood knew,
Knew, and could not forget,

How the earth beneath its roots, long years before,
Had lived and laughed and loved and died in vain,
First of the thousands whom the years of war
Strewed on the Trojan plain.

Thus the old tale. Now earth forgets the youth
Laodameia loved and Hector slew:
But still the dream is shadow of a truth,
If aught be true.

For still man's soul soars high above the world,
  Straining towards heaven over land and sea,
Forgetting how its hidden roots lie curled
  Deep in mortality,

Till suddenly it sees the unrevealed
  Beyond the laughter and the light of May,
Sees that earth's sun but lights a battlefield:
  And the green leaf dies away.

Unquestioning the ploughman turns the sod,
  Wide wave his harvests, his sons multiply;
The craftsman toils and questions not the nod
  Of eyeless destiny.

But who sees furthest, sees too far at last
  Into the vanity of vanities;
Barren his seed, long ere his day be past,
  His green grows sere and dies.

Yet still man's race climbs on above the world,
  Straining towards heaven over land and sea,
Forgetting how its hidden roots lie curled
  Deep in mortality.

LOUIS UNTERMEYER

THE STONE'S HYMN

EARTHQUAKES prepared me, made my bed;
Worlds rose within me, fell apart.
Now small lives move beneath and overhead,
While unseen heavens open in my heart.

Beyond extremities of pain,
I touch the very source of might.
Do I not drink the warm, impersonal rain,
Feed on the lavish and indifferent light?

Here, in a permanent peace, I lie
Till finity and all its shapes are done;
And sorrow is an air that passes by,
And death a little absence of the sun.

Content to wait while kingdoms crack
And men conspire and planets climb,
I know no fear, no weariness, no lack,
Who have eternity instead of time.

THE BABBITT JAMBOUREE

WHEN I see an Indian dressed for war
Yet dancing for a Babbitt jambouree
In plumes no Babbitt ever dares to wear,
An anger rises in me
Like high tide in the sea.
These are my own, these Indians. And I know
What makes the breeds more bitter than the bloods.
There's just one drop of Indian blood in me,
Yet in tremendous April tides and floods
It seems to sweep upon me when I watch
Those who have owned this land turned to a show.

And when I put a feather in my hat,
It is with thoughts the Babbitts cannot know.
Woe to the pale face then, who thinks it is for show.

That little feather stands for a whole war.
It means I beat the tom-toms in the rain;
It means a scalping knife is in my belt,
That I will lead the young braves, not in vain.
It means when all these silly days are done,
Sons of this soil will come into their own,
Sons of the Mohawk,
Sons of Pocahontas,
Bred of these rocks and mountains, blood and bone.

NOTE: Half-breed Indians, quarter breeds, eighth breeds, sixteenth breeds, thirty-second breeds, are all referred to in Western parlance as "breeds." Pure-blooded Indians are referred to as "bloods."

MOLLY ANDERSON HALEY

THE CHILD JESUS OF PRAGUE

WITHOUT–the great world dead, December snow,
But in the little room what cosy glow
Of firelight weaving shadows on the wall!
The kettle's song–peace brooding over all.
Above the beds, high on His sturdy shelf
Beneath a glass, the Blessed One Himself,
The Little Christ of Prague, is looking down.
Dressed in His splendid robe, His halo-crown,
He holds the world safe in one hand and spreads
The other over sleepy little heads
That trust it so. The hearth illumines Him,
As shines the Host in sanctuary dim,
The Infant God, Who till the new day's start
Shall guard the little brothers of His heart.
Hushed as a breath exhaled, His presence fills
This simple room, the Eternal One Who wills
To be the equal of the humblest here.
No hurt can come to us while He is near.
Jesus, Our Brother, watches while we rest,
Our own, as these are ours that we like best:
The lovely doll, the wooden horse, the sheep,
Safe in the corner, safe for us who sleep.
Beyond the curtained snugness of the room
Some kind of clock sounds through the snowy gloom.
The child in his warm bed with happy sigh
That One he loves is hovering near by
To fend away all danger and all harm,
Stirs drowsily, and stretches out his arm;

Makes vain attempt to rouse himself, and then
Drifts back contented to his dreams again.

MARY AUSTIN

I HAVE KNOWN POETS

I HAVE known poets in my time . . . .

I have also known a Cardinal,
A gold-laced General,
A Cabinet Minister and several millionaires,
Learned men, lover men–
And I would lose the lot of them
For any one of half a dozen poets that I know!
And I say, Lord,
When my time comes to go,
I shall not care for Heaven if the poets stay outside.
You may keep my starry crown
For some poor soul that craves it,
And give my harp
To any Angel child that plays it,
But I will take the poets and what you have left over,
A windy hill to walk upon, a filmy cactus flower,
A maple tree, a lady fern or bee caroused in clover,
Of all I've loved and sung about just the odds and ends–
And two or three poets to be my friends!

PHYLLIS MÉGROZ

SONG

A VOICE from lucent heights of day
Beat on my spirit's house of clay.
My drowséd spirit sighed and ſtirred,
But knew not word from golden word.
For earth with ghaſt and goblin cries
Shrilled: "Sleeper, seek not to arise,
Nor ſtrive to break the poppy-spell
I bound thee in, who love thee well.
For, Soul, as long as thou wilt keep
Secure in thy enchanted sleep,
Thou shalt not know the spear-thruſt keen
That pierces those whose eyes have seen
The ſtars in beauty round them fall,
Elusive and impalpable,
And being earth-enchained, have caught
The muted whisper of God's thought.
Sleep, Soul, leſt thou ſhouldſt wake and find
In vain thou ſeekeſt to unwind
The awful knot of humankind."
But as the sun-parched soil doth gain
At laſt the slow, soft ſtreams of rain,
So my clay-captive spirit caught
The meaning of the words it sought,
And shattered sleep in joy and pain.

EARTH-BOUND

LORD, if I dare not sing of seraphs' flaming wings,
Milton's sky-tinctured plumes and Dante's Mystic Rose,
Take then my happy songs of earth's so lovely things
Where my heart finds repose.

My dull sight grows bewildered when it tries to gaze
On the supernal. How should I outstare the sun?
Easier to see, dew-spangled in the woodland ways,
The web the spider spun.

Bloom the fierce blossoms of Thy distant Paradise–
Here weeds like rockets burst to stars; here daisies grow
In feathered grass: rooted like them I rest my eyes
On the dear earth I know.

Is not earth's bounty but a hint of that which flames
Beyond the sun? Didst Thou not leave me here for sign
Lily and mustard-tree and sheep and little lambs,
The wheatfield and the vine?

Birds flash about me, making love and building nests,
And the kind smiling heavens look down upon their love–
Comes there not somehow to my breast, and their small breasts,
The Holy Ghost, the Dove?

PADRAIC COLUM

DUBLIN ROADS

WHEN you were a lad that lacked a trade,
Oh, many's the thing you'd see on the way
From Kill-o'-the-Grange to Ballybrack,
And from Cabinteely down to Bray
When you walked these roads the whole of a day.

High walls there would be to the left and right,
With ivies growing across the top,
And a briary ditch on the other side,
And a place where a quiet goat might crop,
And a wayside bench where a man could stop.

A hen that had found a thing in her sleep,
One would think, the way she went craw-craw-cree,
You would hear as you sat on the bench was there,
And a cock that thought he crew mightily,
And all the stir of the world would be

A cart that went creaking along the road,
And another cart that kept coming a-near;
A man breaking stones; for bits of the day
One stroke or another would come to you clear,
And then no more from that stone-breaker.

With head bent to the stone, or lifted up
To watch the sky, he sat there alone,
A cobbler that didn't mend, but broke;
The dazzles would come from his heap of stone,
When, after the rain, the sun it shone.

And you'd leave him there, that stone-breaker,
And you'd wonder who came to see what was done
By him in a day, or a month, or a week:
He broke a stone and another one,
And you left him there, and you travelled on.

A quiet road! You would get to know
The briars and stones along by the way;
A dozen times you'd see last year's nest;
A peacock's cry, a pigeon astray
Would be marks enough to put on a day;

Or the basket-carriers you would meet:
A man and a woman– they were a pair!
The woman going beside his heel:
A straight-walking man with a streak of him bare,
And eyes that would give you a crafty stare.

Coming down from the hill they'd have ferns to
sell,
Going up from the strand, they'd have cockles in
stock;
Sand in their baskets from the sea,
Or clay that was stripped from a hillside rock–
A pair that had often stood in the dock!

Or a man that played on a tin-whistle:
He looked as he'd taken a scarecrow's rig;
Playing and playing as though his mind
Could do nothing else but go to a jig,
And no one around him, little or big.

And you'd meet no man else until you came
Where you would look down upon the sedge,
And watch the Dargle water flow,
And men smoke pipes on the bridge's ledge,
While a robin sang by the haws in a hedge.

Or no bird sang, and the bird-catchers
Would have talk enough for a battle gained,
When they came from a field and stood by the
bridge,
Taking shelter beside it while it rained,
While the bird new-caught huddled and strained.

Then men would come by with a rick of hay
Piled on the cart; with them you would be
Walking beside the piled-up load:
It would seem as it left the horses free,
They went with such stride and so heartily.

And so you'd go back along the road.

PANOPE

HOW lovely are the tombs of the dead nymphs
On the heroic shore–the glittering plinths
Of jacynth . . . hyacinthine waves profound
Sigh of the beauty out of sight and sound

And many a golden foot that pressed the sand–
Panope walking like the pomp of waves
With plumaged helmet near the fountain caves
The panoply of suns on distant strand–

Is only now an arena for the worm,
Her golden flesh lies in the dust's frail storm

And beauty water-bright for long is laid
Deep in the empire of eternal shade–

Only the sighing waves know now the plinth
Of those deep towers that were of hyacinth.

But still the echoes of that helmeted bright hair
Are like the pomp of tropic suns, the blare

That from the inaccessible horizon runs–
The eternal music of heroic suns
When their strong youth comes freshened from deep seas–
And the first music heard among the trees.

ENCOUNTER

'TWIXT dream and wake we wandered on,
Thinking of naught but thee and me;
And lo, when day was nearly gone,
A wondrous sight did see.

There, in a bed of rushes, lay
A child, all naked, golden, fair–
Young Cupid dreaming Time away,
With roses in his hair.

Tender sleep had o'ertaken him,
Quenched his bright arrows, loosed his bow,
And in oblivion sweet and dim,
Had stilled him through and through.

Never have I such colour seen
As burned in his young dreaming face,
Cheek, hair, and lip laid drowsily
In slumber's faint embrace.

Oh, how he started; how his eyes
Caught back their sudden shiningness
To see you stooping, loving-wise,
Him, slumbering, to caress!

How flamed his brow, what childish joy
Leapt in his heart at sight of thee,
When, "Mother! mother!" cried the boy–
And, frowning, turned on me.

PILGRIMAGE

WHEN the far south glittered
Beyond the grey beaded plains
And cloudier ships were bitted
Along the pale waves,
The showery breeze that plies
A mile from Ara stood
And took our boat on sand:
There by dim wells the women tied
A wish on thorn, while rainfall
Was quiet as the turning of books
In the holy schools at dawn.

Grey holdings of rain
Had grown less with the fields
As we came to that blessed place
Where hail and honey meet.
O Clonmacnoise was crossed
With light: those cloistered scholars
Whose knowledge of the gospel
Is cast as metal in pure voices,
Were all rejoicing daily
And cunning hands with gold and jewels
Brought chalices to flame.

Loud above the grassland
In Cashel of the towers
We heard with the yellow candles
The chanting of the hours,
White clergy saying High Mass,
A fasting crowd at prayer,

A choir that sang before them,
And in stained glass the holy day
Was sainted as we passed
Beyond that chancel where the dragons
Are carved upon the arch.

Treasured with chasuble,
Sun-braided, rich-cloak'd wine-cup,
We saw the iron hand-bells,
Great annals in the shrine
A high-king bore to battle:
Where from the branch of Adam
The noble forms of language–
Brighter than green or blue enamels
Burned in white bronze–embodied
The wings and fiery animals
Which veil the chair of God.

Beyond a rocky townland
And that last tower where ocean
Is dim as haze, a sound
Of wild confession rose:
Black congregation moved
Around the booths of prayer
To hear a saint reprove them,
And from his boat he raised a blessing
On souls that had come down
The holy mountain of the west
Or wailed still in the cloud.

Light in the tide of Shannon
May ride at anchor half
The day and high in spar top

Or leather sails of their craft
Wine merchants will have sleep;
But on a barren isle
Where Paradise is praised
At sunrise, smaller than the seagulls,
We heard white Culdees pray
Until our hollow ship was kneeling
Over the longer waves.

JOSEPH AUSLANDER

ESCAPE

I AM pavilioned here from past and present;
From yesterday and from to-morrow locked:
I sit and watch that flashing bird, the pheasant,
Plunge by me while the heavy peace is rocked
With the swift fire of his sweeping plumes.
Save for that instant edged in flame no sound
Snares in the somnolent and level looms:
The bees with loaded baskets brush the ground;
Or an occasional painted horsefly grooms
Himself in sunlight, brisk, serene, profound;
Or from the bluebell's balcony a bird
Like the muezzin from his minaret
Calls out the holy interval word for word;
The late night pauses golden with regret;
A leaf snaps loose; there is no other sound.

I am a cell where silence like a bee
Packs down one radiant and essential hour:
I am a door sewed up with subtlety
Of silver by a spider's rapid power;
Between me and the world an armistice
Hangs by a thread as delicate as hair:
The yellow jacket is aware of this,
The droning dragon-fly is well aware.
And if the sword fall, if the serpent hiss,
If beauty cannot save me, if despair
Is forced upon me as a habit–how
Shall I believe in grass or song or sun
Or any bird diving from bough to bough
Like a fish with wings? How shall I, having none,
Escape the hawk's black circles in the air?

KATHLEEN CONYNGHAM GREENE

THE SPRING CONQUERS LONDON

THE black magician's hand
Is loosed again,
The Spring has stormed the land
In wind, in rain.

Even to the rigid street
His hosts break through,
The pavements at our feet
Are drenched in blue.

Over the rain-swept roofs
His chargers race,
Stamping their silver hoofs
In furious pace.

His cohorts sling their rains,
Their lances throw,
They strike our smutty panes
With sun-drawn bow.

Only the incurious crowd
Have missed the thing;
These see the sun, the cloud,
But not the Spring.

MARGARET WIDDEMER

THE KNIGHT'S RETURN

WE have gone riding where the moon was riding,
Now are we back again from very far.
There was no end beyond those bright horizons . . .
Let us hold close the little things that are.

Where the wild banners beat we sang and followed,
Trampling To-day at proud To-morrow's feet:
What was To-morrow that we gave all for her?
Only To-day less young, less fierce and sweet!

There was a Grail, men said . . . We have not found it.
There was a Quest . . . Yes small earth-things are fair.
There are red flowers low among the grasses,
There is a wind at dusk that lifts our hair.

EDMUND BLUNDEN

THE WARTONS AND OTHER EARLY ROMANTICS

MILD hearts, and modest as the evening bell
That rings so often through your meadow rhyme,
May there be elms and belfries where you dwell,
And the last streaks of day still gild old Time!

In the new heaven and true Jerusalem
Can such things be? That can they! Where you rove,
The glow-worm shall not hide his elvish gem,
The owl with ghostly wing shall tour the grove.

And when the charms and fairies of the night
Are changed to sparkling dew and morning's choir,
Gazing the vale farms, from some sheep-strown height,
How will you welcome Phoebus' dancing fire!

On ancient arches shall your primrose peep,
On diamond lattices your sunbeam play,
Across shy brooks your little peasants leap,
And peace and innocence divide the day.

Nor shall the shades of poets not be seen
Whom you have loved! Milton in his young prime,
Spenser and Chaucer on the daisied green
Shall join with you and hear May-morning chime.

GRACE NOLL CROWELL

LIFE–DEATH

I

AND now that I have travelled many miles
Down many a road–and many a crooked lane,
And know Life is a thing of tears and smiles,
Of peace–and white-winged joy–and bitter pain,
Yet should some brother ask the way to go,
I could not tell him–nor which road is best,
I do not know his way–I only know
That every road and every trail leads West.

No one can go the way that I have gone;
I cannot go where other far trails run,
Through light and shadow–Life has beckoned on
Into the glory of the setting sun.
The way I go–no other feet have trod,
And no one walks the road with me but God.

II

Not knowing Life–how can I well know Death?
Yet when he comes–I think that I shall be
Tip-toe upon a shore–with bated breath,
Watching a broad gold path lead out to sea.
The sun will gild the spires of the town–
Clear bells will call the village folk to prayer,
The sudden summer darkness will drop down,
And I shall turn–and see Death standing there.

The shadows will be very deep that night,
But O, I trust I shall not be afraid;
Perhaps Death carries in his hand a light–
These are the things for which I long have prayed–
And looking in his face–that I shall see
The one friend who had walked the road with me.

V. SACKVILLE-WEST

THE PERSIAN FLUTE

A PERSIAN shepherd by a waterfall
Piping to please himself among his goats,
Gave me this flute, that now upon my wall
Hangs, hollow exile, prisoning its notes.

Its heart is broken; silent are its strains.
I cannot wake the little Persian flute.
It does not, will not, know me; it remains
Beneath my fingers obstinately mute.

Yet this slim reed, when stars were overhead,
And dusk was vocal with the bleating flocks,
Sent up its pure and melancholy thread
Of music by the river and the rocks.

I thought that I should wake that note again
With one clear echo of the hills apart,
And summon Persia to an English lane,–
I had not reckoned with a broken heart.

Shall we go back together, my flute and I,
To find again the shepherd of Shalil,
And when the planet Venus travels high
Above the myrtle grove of Murdafil,

Make each our separate music? For I too
Am silent sometimes, thinking of those stars,
That solitude, those evenings waning blue,
And the lost beauty of the plains of Fars.

HAROLD MONRO

RUMOUR

SOMEBODY is whispering on the ſtair.
What are those words half spoken, half drawn back?
What are those muffled words, some red, some black?
Who is whispering? Who is there?

Somebody is sneaking up the ſtair,
With feet approaching every doorway
Yet never a moment ſtanding anywhere.

Now they are whispering close outside some door.
Or suddenly push it open wide–
You see: whoever said he heard them, he has lied.

And yet words are left dark like heavy duſt
In many rooms, or red like ruſt;
And who contrives to leave them? Some one muſt.

In every ſtreet, this noisy town of ours
Has ſtealthy whispering watchers walking round,
Recording all our movements, every sound,
Hissing and shuffling, and they may have found
To-day my name: to-morrow they'll find yours.

A PRIVATE MAN ON PUBLIC MEN

WHEN my contemporaries were driving
Their coach through Life with strain and striving,
And raking riches into heaps,
And ably pleading in the Courts
With smart rejoinders and retorts,
Or where the Senate nightly keeps
Its vigils, till their fames were fanned
By rumour's tongue throughout the land,
I lived in quiet, screened, unknown,
Pondering upon some stick or stone,
Or news of some rare book or bird
Latterly bought, or seen, or heard,
Not wishing ever to set eyes on
The surging crowd beyond the horizon,
Tasting years of moderate gladness
Mellowed by sundry days of sadness,
Shut from the noise of the world without,
Hearing but dimly its rush and rout,
Unenvying those amid its roar,
Little endowed, not wanting more.

C. HENRY WARREN

THE HOUNDS ARE GONE

UNDER the white November sun
This morning the woods lie quiet. One
By one the cautious creatures come
Out of their warm nocturnal home.
They sniff the chilly blowing air,
Expectant still of trouble there
Awaiting them– then pick their way
Through the churned mud of yesterday.
Even the leaves that palely gleam
On the wands beside the wood-ride seem
As if they question the watching sky
What terror to-day comes galloping by. . .

When all the woods were still and grey
In the nearing dusk of yesterday,
And only the rustle of seldom bird
Or pad of homing feet was heard,–
Suddenly then hot tempest tore
The dreaming quiet asunder, nor
Hardly was there time to hide
From the horror that leapt on every side.
Through snapping boughs the thunder came
Of hoof and skirling horn; and flame
From every steaming hound-tongue seemed
To scorch the scurrying leaves that gleamed
In the undergrowth. Oh, then how fast
The blood pulsed in small veins, as past

The fury flew!–and fear of death
In tiny throats near stopt the breath. . .

But under the white November sky
Quiet again the woodlands lie:
Of all that yelping horde there is
None left to drown the cadences
Of boughs that sway and leaves that fall
And birds that shyly chatter and call–

Only in little yearling hearts
With every sound an added fear now starts.

BABETTE DEUTSCH

SOLILOQUY

LET the saint forgo the world,
Let the martyr tear his flesh,
Only death shall wrench from me
The treasures in the sensual mesh.

Does the spirit know a good
More gold than sun that lays on snow
Its shining unction, when the sky's
Candor blinks at that below?

Does the soul, that hears the spheres
Sounding, lift on such a surf
As thunders when the west wind saws
Forests through without a kerf?

Does the tongueless spirit taste
Manna sweet as air that's keen
With sea-savour or wood-smoke
Or cool smell of rain-washed green?

Each sense has its bliss distinct,
The mind has its own ecstasies,
Golden or tempestuous,
Cutting marrow-deep as these.

HUMBERT WOLFE

ALAN DAVIDSON KEITH

In aeternum Vale

AGAMEMNON sleeps at last in Argos.
Be still, Argive nightingales. No king
will marshal the long ships now
by the sand-beaches. Why do you sing?

Achilles is light of foot no longer.
Hector is the dust of a moth's wing,
and the great shield is tarnished.
Argive nightingales, why do you sing?

It is over, Agamemnon, Agamemnon–
the Iliad of our youth and of spring.
O why do men love like heroes,
and, nightingales, why do you sing?

CHARLES DALMON

THE JOLLY TINKER

THERE was once a tinker who used to sing,
As he jogged along in his caravan,
"If the King is a man, God save the King,
But if only a king, God save the man!"

No dog in the world had teeth so white,
No stag in the world had eyes so brown;
And anyone wanting a stand-up fight
Had only to throw him their challenge down.

And from Berwick-on-Tweed to the Sussex Weald
And from Flamborough Head to Carnarvon Bay,
He would gather from any good roost or field
Fresh stock for his pot at the close of day–

A capon from here, or a duck from there,
Or a pheasant or two, if his luck was in;
For helping himself to good, honest fare
He never considered a grievous sin.

And anything tasty that might accrue
He would add, with the onion that never fails
To give the right flavour to any stew
Concocted in England, or Scotland, or Wales.

And after his supper he still would sing,
As he went to bed in his caravan:
"If the King is a man, God save the King,
But if only a king, God save the man!"

KATHARINE TYNAN

THE MAKER

GOD said: I will make a Child,
An innocent thing and wild,
Soft as a bird in bower,
As a lamb, as a flower;
Both rose and white,
For Man's and My delight.

He said: I will give soft kisses
To be his mother's blisses,
Hands, softest, littlest,
To draw her heart from her breast.
Feet like a rose
To be kissed and held close.

Wiles and dear rogueries,
And clear and lovely eyes,
And laughter like a ring
Of fairy bells a-swing,
Or a fount at play,
Silver and far away.

He said: As this little one
Shall be My beloved son.
Sudden the joy was dim
He thought of Him . . .
And the three gaunt crosses high
On Calvary.

HAROLD LEWIS COOK

THE BARREN TREE

I COME to you as the sunlight
Comes to a tree,
As a blue wave rolling shoreward
From the mid-sea.

But you are secret as a tree deep-hidden
In a dark cloud.
And you are rock whereon the perfect wave
Must cry aloud,

Broken, must fall, fall sighing, sink
Back into ocean.
About you there may be no surge of light
Nor any motion.

No bird calls from your branches to any bird:
No stretched wing there
To scatter sunlight from its pointed plumes.
The tree stands bare.

RICHARD CHURCH

THE MUSICIAN AT REST

(In memory of John Church)

THEY have come with the musician;
They have put him out of sound,
Into his silent sleeping-place
Under the ground.

The snow in its quiet rhythm
Has hung with soundless tune
A symphony round about him
Of quilt and dune.

How lovely the echo of music
That lingers about his grave,
Echo of the singing thoughts
He shaped, and gave.

Large and free as the passion
That shone from his hand and brain
Is the passage of frost and flowers,
Of sun and rain.

He had such store of riches,
They have spilled and overflown
The baskets of the gleaners
Who come down alone,

Who come after the harvest,
His full melody of life,
To gather the cadences of peace
Fallen from strife.

ALFRED KREYMBOURG

FROM "SONATA IN BLUE"

(For Mr. Aiken)

* * *

Conrad and I

We slave like infernal fools in our two cells–
Straining to bring the soul an eternal mesh.
Draining the heart and head, each finger spells
A word we pray will last beyond the flesh.
Both of us, being different in our ways,
Cling to frail paper with a different pen.
The things he writes or I indite, we praise–
For poets, after all, are lonely men
Singing a bit to themselves, but more to each other–
Hoping that fellow there will recognise
A bit of himself in this pale groping brother
Who strives to live through more than mortal eyes,
And adds to a groaning world, too busy to bother,
The tears that only kin and kinship dries.

* * *

Bass River and the Nile

If this river flows, no one can see it flow:
No wind is here; no roaming cloud comes through.
Wind and cloud must have gone by years ago:
Not even a leaf now drifts along the blue.
The pines are utterly still; no needle stirs.
Their limbs are stiff; while each young flowery head
Looks ready to lie in some small human hearse:
Only the memory moves among the dead:

On such a day as this, on a longer stream–
When pines were palms, and the dreamy Nile
pale green–
The slaves rowed Cleopatra through the brine.
Eyeing the amorous course of her slow wine,
She sighs when the boy lies dead who sipped the
brim.
A madman seizes the cup! She smiles at him.

EDEN PHILLPOTTS

A FRUIT PIECE

THE rust-red apricot and golden pear
Make harmony with peach and nectarine,
Dim earthy medlars and the purple shine
Of mulberry and plum, while, amber clear,
Ripe muscats bosom dewy from the vine,
By blushing, white-heart cherries debonnair.
Now netted melon and a paunchy pine,
Wearing his jade aigrette, and mangoes rare.
Rasp, custard-apple, loquat, mangosteen,
The strawberry, granadilla, pomegranate
With amethyst jewels for a fairy queen,
Red orange, fig, banana, sugary date–
Summon them all, and in your rainbow set
A tamarin–the tiniest marmozet.

EDA LOU WALTON

WRITTEN IN SAND

THE mountains were denied her,
And the plains
With their corn-shadowed lanes.
But the desert stretched beside her
And the sunset was ahead
Where she should one day make her bed.
Promised the years between with sand
On either hand,
There was some pity in her need to love
This barren land,
Some will to understand.
There were strange cacti blossoms here,
Like blood-pricks on the windy dunes,
And bloody moons rose near
Paled stars.

Where harsh white bars of light
Shut in a night so blue
There was no passing through
To dreams.
Sleep was a blanket thrown
On a tired shoulder worn to bone,
And there was never any hand
To fill for long another hand
In this most desolate land.
But there was sand,
And one could build with sand
Mirage of water and of green
Where neither water nor a tree was seen,
and there were always castles

Not yet conquered by the wind,
And there were thinned
Weeds like the hair upon an ancient head,
Under the arm-pits weeds, and red
Cacti at the breast.
If there were never rest,
If scenes shifted
Whenever the winds lifted,
There was ecstatic strain
To ascertain
How worlds be readjusted.
Wherever the hawk had nested
He was blown therefrom.
Whatever bloomed was blotted, and some
Heights made pits and pits made heights
In every change of lights.

With mind from body more than half estranged
She loved this world so often rearranged.
Therefore she gave her body to the sand,
Was written by the wind and by the sand;
Time had its way, love sterile, incomplete
And shifting had its way and its defeat,
While her high mind, a tower within the waste
Of crumbling towers, held its solid base.
Though the world plunged and reeled and sank,
And her body its own fury drank
And died more slowly for its thirst,
Though the sun blew up and burst
And winds swept like death's shawl
Across the light,
And it was sudden night,
She understood this place:

Nothing could ever quite efface
Its flux of colour and eternal blue,
Though it were but an hourglass
Sands were sifting through;
Nor would she of such passion quite despair
Till sand had covered over her long hair.

ONE WHO WATCHES

WE are all near to death. But in my friends
I am forewarned too closely of that nearness.
Death haunts their days that are; in him descends
The darkness that shall change their living dearness
To something different, made within my mind
By memories and recordings and convenings
Of voices heard through veils and faces blind
To the kind light of my autumnal gleanings.

Not so much for myself I feel that fear
As for all those in whom my loves must die;
Thus, like some hooded death, I stand apart:
And in their happiest moments I can hear
Silence unending, when those lives must lie
Hoarded like happy summers in my heart.

JAN STRUTHER

A PARADOX

LIKE beggars, lame and dull of heart,
Past me the long days creep
From unsought wakening
To unsought sleep

And yet the years like hot-foot thieves
Run softly, nimbly by,
As though from fierce dispute
They needs must fly.

Sage, you are old and well content:
Can all your wisdom show
What I, being young and sad,
Shall seek to know?
Then say– how come the years to seem so swift,
The days, the days so slow?

MANORBIER

(TO MR. AND MRS. ARTHUR MACHEN)

IT is green with ivy
But the stones are criss-crossed
With cracks and crannies,
Tooth-marks of the frost;
The roofless tower,
The sundered wall,
The gaping lancet,
Frost gnaws them all.
Time in transit
Measured by years
Has emptied the hall,
Rusted the spears.
The long rains fall
Where the marriage bed
Saw the virgin a wife
And the mother dead,
Saw the birth of the son
And the warrior head
White on the pillow
Stained with red.

Now it is summer
The swans float
Each with its double
On the scummy moat.
If you hear the fiddler
Playing his fiddle
It's the wind in the crannies
With dust in its throat.

If you hear the drummer
Tapping his drum
It's a dead branch hanging
Swinging and banging,
Summoning no one,
There is no one to come.

I was born in a chamber
Under the eaves;
The room I remember
And the sound of leaves
And the sound of ocean
And ships come home
When we ran with our welcome
Knee-deep through foam.

In the garden by moonlight
Each leaf on the rose-bush
A silver flake,
A ghost of a flame!
Hearing voices, the loveless one
Fired by their passion
Fled down to the lake
Where a tall lady came.

"To-morrow at sunset,"
She said to her lover,
"Look up to my window
And I will be there."
She glimmered away,
And faint like a halo
The moon on her hair.

Most beautiful lady,
How slowly the snail
Through the grey dust lengthens
His rainbow trail.
On the steps of the sunset
Did I find you–or not?
How should you remember
When your lover forgot?

Is there nobody now
Who can speak with my speech
But the wind in the ruin,
The waves on the beach?
There are hundreds of cities
Out there beyond reach,
Three thousand miles over
The sea whence I came.
I built them myself,
I left this to the weather
And forgot my own name.

I will go up the stairway
That ends in the air,
I will stand in the chapel
And offer a prayer
To saints who for ages
Have not been there.
I will lean out of windows
That have no top
And look far below me
A dizzy drop
To the moat and the cliff
And beyond to the beach

And beyond to the ocean
Where the eyes stop.

Why did I leave
  this house like a Viking?
Why did I leave it
  for frosts to crack?
Did the stairway lead me
  then to disaster?
Did a door ajar
  show the flame and the rack?
I have forgotten the cause of my going,
And even the cause of my coming back.

Some things with me
  are the never-dying,
All of us curséd
  with time's effacement;
The ivy-vine grown
  so black has forgotten
The beginning tendril
  that clung to the basement;
The gap in the wall has forgotten the window,
And I, the face that looked down from the case-
    ment.

Now is the season when the whole world over
The herds are munching the ripe clover;
The green baby-hair of the crops to come
Is ruffled by the wind; the may-flies hum
In the air, and the bees intermittently humming
Dive to one flower and drone to a sweeter;
This is the mating-song season, at evening
When the lover listens his love will be coming.

But summer like winter
Conspiring slowly
To throw down the mighty
And exalt the lowly
Is gnawing at walls
All but time held holy.
By tendrils of ivy
The stones are split;
Trees shoulder the ingles
Where earls would sit,
And the ants drag the mortar
Away, bit by bit.

Who is my brother?
Who is my friend?
The song does not falter
Though the singer end.
But I, the last singer,
Forgetting my song
One summer morning
A thousand years long,
Have gone up the stairway
That ends in the air,
Surprising dead saints
With the ghost of a prayer,
And looked out of windows
They have no top,
To the bach, to the ocean,
Where the eyes stop.
But the mind will not stop.
The heart will not stop.

RUPERT BROOKE

FAFAÏA

(*This poem, which Rupert Brooke sent me in a letter from the South Seas, has been mislaid ever since, and only now comes to light among my papers.*—E.M.)

STARS that seem so close and bright,
Watched by lovers through the night,
Swim in emptiness, men say,
Many a mile and year away.

And yonder star that burns so white,
May have died to dust and night
Ten, maybe, or fifteen year,
Before it shines upon my dear.

Oh! often among men below,
Heart cries out to heart, I know,
And one is dust a many years,
Child, before the other hears.

Heart from heart is all as far,
Fafaïa, as star from star.

Saanapu,
November, 1913.

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